

The RYERSON
POETRY
CHAP-BOOKS



Songs

Being a Selection of Earlier
Sonnets and Lyrics

By
HELENA COLEMAN

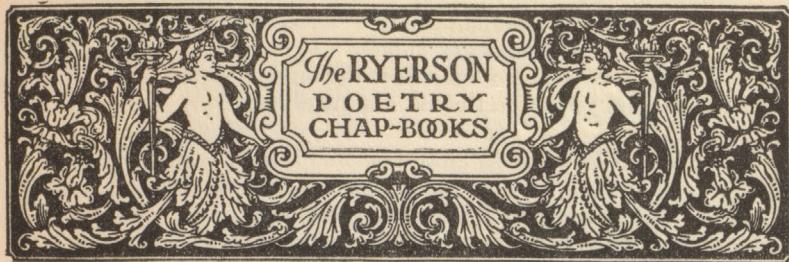


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Miss Helena Coleman was born in a parsonage at Newcastle, Ontario, being a descendant of John Quincy Adams, and has resided most of her life in Toronto. Her two books of verse are *Songs and Sonnets* (1906), and *Marching Men* (1917), and from these distinguished volumes, long out of print, this present selection is made. Hitherto this series of Chap-Books has refrained from including poems which have already appeared in book form. It has been felt, however, that poems so deservedly popular as these should be made available in this form.



Songs

BEING A SELECTION OF EARLIER SONNETS
AND LYRICS

By Helena Coleman



I AM CONTENT WITH CANADA

OF COUNTRIES far and famed have I been told,
And of the joys that foreign travel brings,
Of wonders, beauties, one would fain behold
To stir the heart with fresh imaginings.

And I myself in storied Switzerland
Have watched the Alps in their majestic calm,
And been by jasmine-scented breezes fanned
In tropic isles that bear the stately palm.

And many a fabled castle on the Rhine
Has winged my fancy as we drifted by;
Beside the oleander and the vine
I've dreamed beneath the soft Italian sky.

But I have never been more deeply stirred
By any loveliness of land or sea
Than when upon Canadian shores I've heard
The lonely loon or curlew call to me.

One

Across our own unnumbered Northern lakes,
And over leagues of winding water-ways
Upon whose nameless shores the aspen shakes
And yellows in the soft autumnal haze.

(And Oh! to swing away where all is new,
And share the haunts of shy and timeless things
To dip one's paddle in the liquid blue
And skim the water lightly as with wings!)

When drifting on the broad St. Lawrence tide,
Among those islands wrought of mist and dream,
To realms of unreality I glide,
Where phantom stars within the waters gleam,

Or when among the Rockies I have caught
The sudden rise of peaks above the cloud,
And on the tumult of my quickened thought
New visions, dreams, and aspirations crowd;

Or, thinking of the future and of all
That generations yet unborn shall see—
The forests that for axe and ploughshare call,
The wealth of golden harvests yet to be;

I am content with Canada, and ask
No fairer land than has been given me,
No greater joy, no more inspiring task,
Than to upbuild and share her destiny.

CANDLE-FLAME

HAST singed thy pretty wings, poor moth?
Fret not; some moths there be
That wander all the weary night,
Longing in vain to see
The light.

Hast felt the scorching flame, poor heart?
Grieve not; some hearts exist
That know not, grow not to be strong,
And weep not, having missed
The song.

POSTPONEMENT

BEHIND their veils of clinging mist,
Elusive as a dream,
In changing rose and amethyst
The mountains stood supreme.

Consumed as by some inward fire
Of brooding mystery,
They held the heart of his desire—
His love and poetry.

And always, ever, some dear time—
So ran his hidden hopes—
He meant to leave his task and climb
Their beckoning emerald slopes,

To scale their precipices bold,
And watch the rose-wreaths rise,
To see the gates of Heaven unrolled
Before his longing eyes.

But always, always, something pressed
Between him and his aim;
He kept his dream, but gave the rest
To meet the common claim.

He ploughed the black and fertile plain,
And sowed the waiting soil,
And harvested the yellow grain,
And spent his days in toil;

Nor failed to give a helping hand
When others stood in need;
But strove to meet each new demand
With patient word and deed.

So went the seasons. Wrapped in mist
The mountains, blue and gold,
Behind their veils of amethyst
Still wait, but—he is old!

OUR COMMON BROTHERHOOD

I NEVER saw his face, or knew his name,
But that gay morning as I loitering came
Around the blossoming hillside, all aflame

With lilac spires and apple-blossoms brave,
That to the rifling air their sweetness gave,
I saw where they were making him his grave!

If I had chanced to meet him by the way,
In all the golden sunshine of the day,
No pleasant word I might have found to say;

But since he could no longer come to meet
The world, love-smitten, dreaming at his feet,
Nor feel within his pulse the springtide beat,

Nor love again, I gave for him instead,
And poured upon his low, unconscious head
The sacramental love that shrives the dead.

And though I went my way with eyelids wet
For grief of one whom I had never met,
Because his day so soon was ended, yet

I turned my face up Heavenward again,
Believing human love is not in vain;
And, moved and softened by the sudden strain

Of fellowship, I touched the larger mood
Of universal love, and understood
The meaning of our common brotherhood.

MOTHER-BORN

SINCE fate has given you no child
To lie within your arm,
That by its presence undefiled
Should keep your soul from harm,

If you were truly mother-born,
You would have played the part,
And found some little one forlorn
To fold within your heart.

WHEN AUTUMN COMES

WHEN Spring first breathes on the russet hill,
In her own faint, lovely fashion,
One's pulses stir with a sudden thrill;
But when Autumn comes the heart stands still,
Moved with a deeper passion.

There's a wonderful charm in the soft, still days
When earth to her rest is returning,
When the hills are drowned in a purple haze,
When the wild grape sweetens, and all in a blaze
Of crimson the maples are turning.

Open your gates, O heart of mine!
These are the days we have waited,
Earth has distilled a draught divine,
These are the days that hold the wine
Of Summer concentrated.

CONQUEST

TRIM to the gale, I carry my banner unfurled,
I steer to a chart unseen and unknown to the world.

I challenge the fates, I laugh in the face of defeat,
I look from afar and know not the sign of retreat.

The chosen went forth, I stood with them not on the roll,
I stood in my place uncalled and was valiant of soul.

Denial has been my armor well-tempered and bright,
From pain I have woven banners both crimson and white.

From out of the dark I forged me a trumpet and blew,
From out of the dark came ringing a voice that I knew.

The victors returned, I heard them come marching in line.
The victors returned—the conqueror's triumph was mine!

My vigils are filled with the sound of the trumpeter's song,
I wait for the dawn content. I have seen and am strong.

THE VOICES OF OUR DAY

HOW shall we bring to one clear tone
The divers voices of our day,
Or what authority obey
Where tongues arise, confused, unknown?

How shall we in the clamor give
To each an undivided ear,
Or through discordant doctrines hear
The still, small voice imperative?

Where devious roadways twist and cross
How shall we find the narrow way
That leads afar to endless day,
Past all this fevered fret and loss?

Can doubting spirits ever thrust
Their roots deep to the heart of life?
Or bear above its toil and strife
The fruit of steadfast love and trust?

When in the wilderness we roam
And from afar strange voices call
And night's uncertain shadows fall,
How shall we know which way leads home?

FOREST TRAGEDY

AFLOAT upon the tide one summer night,
Dreamily watching how the moonbeams bright
Made little broken rings of fairy light,

And vaguely lost in that half-conscious mood
That steals upon the sense in solitude,
I drifted near a shadowy island wood

Where all was silent, scarce a leaf was stirred—
So still the air—when suddenly I heard
The piercing, anguished cry as of a bird

In such distress it made the echoes ring
And set the startled silence quivering—
The wild appeal of some sweet feathered thing

In its extremity. And then a sound,
Half-muffled, faint, and all again was drowned
In silence inarticulate, profound.

I went my way along the lonely shore
But that despairing cry—the sound it bore
Of destiny—remains for evermore;

And in my restless heart that bitter strain
Of questioning doubt and wild rebellious pain—
I thought was laid—came surging up again.

SINCE READING MAETERLINCK

I USED to think the honey-bee
A harmless little fellow,
An animated symphony
Done up in brown and yellow,
But since I read my Maeterlinck
I really don't know what to think.

Such marvellous sagacity
And delicate acumen,
Such zeal and pertinacity
Are really more than human;
Such order, industry and law
Inspire me with the deepest awe.

Republican in principle
Is laid their constitution,
And every little waxen cell
Accords with evolution;
Their national life is most complex—
Nor merely to be thought reflex.

The queen and all her acolytes
Are carefully defended,
The drones and all the lesser lights
Are also well attended;
That they can fashion queen or drone
Most undeniably is shown.

They practise every secret art,
Nature herself defying,
And to the death each plays his part—
'Tis really stupefying;
One questions if great Socrates
Knew half as much as honey-bees.

I almost feel I should forsake—
It seems such desecration—
The honey that I used to take
With so much delectation
As if one ate the very flowers—
The hearts of happy summer hours.

If ever country life to you
Seems dull and overrated,
And you would have a point of view
Both fresh and elevated,
Read up on Bees, by Maeterlinck,
He'll show you how to see and think.

THE RECRUIT

THROUGH all the anguish of those days,
The haunting horror and the woe,
One thought can set my heart ablaze,
My memory aglow.

It is his look just as he turned
After the last good-byes were said,
A look as though for him there burned
Some beacon-light ahead.

As though beyond the farthest thought
Of this dark world's horizon rim,
Some star of faith by us uncaught
Swung into range for him.

As though his spirit, winged, had flown
Past stormy seas on some far quest,
And like a bird had found its own
Hid in a quiet nest.

ROCKING IN THE BAY

FROM my nook beneath the pine
I can see the graceful line
Of the little brown canoe in the bay;
Bright and windy is the weather,
But there's no one to untether
And go speeding to the open far away
Where the ragged clouds are flying
And the sunset gold is dying—
Empty, listless, she is lying,
Idly rocking, idly rocking
In the bay.

How she'd leap to answer him
When he took the paddle slim
And they'd race as laughing victors to the fray!
They would climb the waves together,
Riding buoyant as a feather—
Or a bird that slants a wet wing to the spray;
But the echoing laughter dies,
Lone and far the seagull cries,
And the little playmate lies
Idly rocking, idly rocking,
In the bay.

Son o' mine, O little son,
Has the race indeed been run—
Have the storm-clouds turned the blue and gold to grey?
God be praised who gave you grace,
Strength of heart and will to face
Wilder winds upon the death-fields far away;
God be praised for lads like you,
And for hearts that measure true,
Though we turn our brimming eyes
To your little brown canoe
By the reedy shore that lies
All the empty summer through
Idly rocking, idly rocking,
In the bay.

ON THE TRAIL

OH, there's nothing like the prairie
When the wind is in your face,
And a thunder-storm is brewing,
And night comes down apace—
'Tis then you feel the wonder
And immensity of space.

Far in the gathering darkness
Against the dying day
The ghostly hills are lying,
The hills that stand for aye—
How in the dusk they glimmer
And palpitare away.

Behind them still there lingers
A hint of sunset gold;
The trail before you stretches,
A long black ribbon unrolled—
Long and black and narrow,
Where the buffalo trod of old.

Though motionless for ever,
The prairies seem to keep
The rolling swell and hollow
Of some undulating deep,
As to the edge of heaven
And still beyond they sweep.

Between your knees the bronco
Goes hotly o'er the plain,
With rhythmic swing and measure
You feel him give and strain,
And on your cheek come stinging
The first wild drops of rain.

How vast the world and void!
No living thing in sight,
As to the lonely prairie
Comes down the lonely night,
But in your heart what freedom—
What sense of buoyant flight!

Once more the pulses quicken
With life's exultant pride,
With hope and high ambition,
As on and on you ride,
Till all the old desires
Come galloping beside.

Oh, there's nothing like the prairie
When the wind is in your face,
And the boom of distant thunder
Comes rolling up apace—
'Tis then you feel the wonder
And immensity of space.

THE GUARDIANS OF THE PLACE

ABOUT the old deserted place,
So long forsaken and forlorn,
There lingers still a touch of grace,
A fragrance every year new-born.

For lilacs there in Spring unfold
Beside the long unopened door,
Communion still they seem to hold
With those who come and go no more.

Against the window-frame they lean,
Their banners floating to the air,
And spread their arms as if to screen
The silent shadows lurking there.

Pale spires uplifted to the sun
Break into bloom as if to fill,
In memory of days long done,
The empty place with fragrance still.

As if with beauty they would hide
The fallen fortunes of the race,
Still cherishing with love and pride
The old traditions of the place.

So, year by year, they closer press,
And every season slowly spread,
Praising with silent loveliness
The unknown, long-forgotten dead.

THE SOUL BEHIND

OH, lovely is the human face,
Its curves and color, form and grace
So tenderly combined.
But oh, however fair it be,
It is not beautiful to me
Nor full of charm unless I see
The living soul behind.

And lovely are Earth's various moods,
Her winter snows, her summer woods,
Her meadows green and broad;
But oh, I find no loveliness
In mountain, sea or sky, unless
Their changing forms to me express
The changelessness of God.

SEPTEMBER COMES AGAIN

AND now September! in whose languid veins
The wine of summer, slow-distilling, flows;
The light and glory fade—the laughter wanes,
But earth more lovely grows.

O rare September! has it all been said—
The wistful hours, the soft, reluctant days,
When Nature seems to pause with arms outspread
And heart that yearns both ways?

Upon the mellowed harp-strings of the vine
The fitful winds their soft forebodings urge,
And with the liquid murmurs of the pine
In plaintive sweetness merge.

The mountains, veiled in gold and amethyst,
Their once familiar outlines scarcely show;
Across the uplands, faint with purple mist,
The oaks and maples glow.

Those gathering mists the coming change would hide,
But in our hearts already sounds the knell.
Oh, never surges love in such a tide
As when we say farewell!

Yet come, September! All the old desires,
The old enchantments, at your touch return—
'Tis in our hearts your August-kindled fires
In deepest rapture burn.

And in our hearts the ancient melody
That Earth has yielded of her joy and pain,
Comes softly stealing, echoed back from thee
In one surpassing strain.

Still Summer waits, her mood with thine akin,
As if her love could not release its hold
Until her little hosts were folded in
Against the coming cold—

Against the cold till March once more unlocks
The gates of frost and rives the icy chain,
And June returns to lead her little flocks
Across the fields again—

Across the fields, beyond the shining hill,
When Pan plays up his pipes o' love and pain—
But now, O heart of mine, be still, be still,
September comes again!

THE FIELDS ARE GREEN IN CANADA

THE fields are green in Canada,
And bloom is on the bough,
The orchards by the farmhouse
Are just a glory now;
The thorn-trees by the fences,
The lilacs by the door,
Seem more intent on blooming than
They ever did before.

But there are eyes in Canada
That cannot see for tears
And there are hearts in Canada
Grown weary with their fears,
The nesting birds of Canada,
They pipe to deafened ears.

The April woods of Canada
 Harbour the sweetest things—
A flash of lilting rapture
 Mere recollection brings;
Hepaticas and violets
 And all the fairy train
Run out in rosy pathways to
 Subdue the world again.

But who is there in Canada
 Has any mind to-day
To roam the woods of Canada
 Or count the flowers of May,
When Sorrow walks in Canada
 And Grief has mind to stay?

Yet is there bloom in Canada
 With scent of other life
Plucked from the fields of burning,
 Snatched from the hands of strife;
And they who won it, silenced
 Just at the turn of dawn,—
Their names shall long remembered be
 When ours are dimmed and gone.

They made a song for Canada
 Shall ring the world around,
Though hearts may grieve, yet Canada
 For evermore is crowned,
And these green fields of Canada
 Henceforth are sacred ground.

THE SEED

SCARCE had my flower bloomed when one
 By one its crimson petals fell;
Touched by some change inscrutable
 Its life and loveliness were done.

And with it something in my heart
 Suddenly passed and was no more,
As if a hand had closed the door
 Where Beauty, dreaming, sat apart.

O life, O loveliness, how brief!
How soon the costly wine is spilled—
The casket sealed, the laughter stilled—
But oh, how long, how endless, grief!

So musing, mourning, I complained,
When lo! a seed replaced my flower;
All that was drawn from sun and shower
In substance still to me remained.

• • • • •
A voyager, this tiny barque,
That breasts the sea of change and loss,
What power fashioned it to cross
The wide abysses of the dark?

Shall not that Power in some sphere
Beyond our finite reach or ken
Bring into life and bloom again
The good we sought to fashion here?

NIGHT AMONG THE THOUSAND ISLANDS

MYSTERIOUS falls the moon's transforming light
On lichen-covered rock and granite wall,
Comes piercing through the hollows of the night
The loon's weird, plaintive call.

Like some great regiment upon the shore
The stalwart pines go trooping up the hill,
And faintly in the distance o'er and o'er
Echoes the whip-poor-will.

Like silhouettes the dreaming islands keep
Their silent watches, mirrored in the tide,
While in their labyrinthine aisles some deep,
Still mystery seems to hide.

From out the shadows dim against the sky
Come stealing shadow-ships not made of men,
Faint phantom-barques that slowly drifting by
Are swallowed up again.

While silently beneath, the river flows,
Unfathomed, dark, a great resistless tide,
Within its bosom deep, the virgin snows,
From many a mountain-side.

And, drifting with the current, how we feel
The haunting witchery of Beauty's spell!
The world we left behind seems too unreal,
Where such enchantments dwell.

The vexing cares that overfill our days
Slip stealthily away, and we are wooed
Back to the healing, half-forgotten ways
Of peace and solitude.

ANALOGY

I

WHILE yet 'twas dark mine eyes were formed to see;
In silence, ears were shapen unto me.

Ere I traversed the subtle ways of thought
Within the sealèd crypt a brain was wrought.

And delicately fashioned was the hand,
Though all unknown the task it should command.

Yet these are but the parts; what of the whole—
The man compact, complete, a living soul?

Shall that which grew within him year by year—
Knowledge and judgment, mastery of fear,

The dawning dream of kindlier brotherhood,
And that dim hope, so little understood,

Which seems to beckon to some higher end
Than yet he has the power to comprehend—

Shall these prove fallow, and the finished man
Be unrelated to the final plan?

II

Can man know longing for a thing
That is not—has not been?
Dare we distrust desires that spring
Spontaneous within?

Tongue argues speech; and power, deed—
Each is by each implied;
Can there be universal need
Unmet, unsatisfied?

The heart attuned to love will find
Love waiting at the door,
He who to knowledge turns his mind
Finds knowledge there before,

And shall the deepest want we know,
The spirit's anguished cry
For kinship through the darkness go
Unanswered from on high?

ACHIEVEMENT

AS SUDDEN turn—at last was scaled
The summit of his aim,
The cheer went up, his name was hailed
With generous acclaim.

But he for whom they raised the shout
And wreathed the shining bay
Strove in his soul with new-born doubt,
And silent, turned away.

Before his vision there arose,
Like spectres of the night,
The nameless company of those
Who perished in the fight;

The host baptized in blood and tears,
Outstripped upon the way,
To whom the gray monotonous years
Bring no redeeming day;

The hapless, toiling, tired throng
Who sow but never reap,
And through their weary lives one long
Unceasing vigil keep.

And as he gazed there rose and burned
An anguish in his soul,
His earlier dreams forgot, he turned
Back from the hard-won goal;

Back to the crowded ways to bear
The common lot again,
To mingle tears with tears and share
Life's heritage of pain.

There, though he bears no meed of praise,
Yet rounded with content,
He knows a joy that far outweighs
The world's aggrandizement.

MORE LOVELY GROWS THE EARTH

MORE lovely grows the earth as we grow old,
More tenderness is in the dawning spring,
More bronze upon the blackbird's burnished wing,
And richer is the autumn cloth-of-gold;
A deeper meaning, too, the years unfold,
Until to waiting hearts, each living thing
For very love its bounty seems to bring,
Intreating us with beauty to behold.

Or is it that with years we grow more wise
And reverent to the mystery profound—
Withheld from careless or indifferent eyes—
That broods in simple things the world around—
More conscious of the Love that glorifies
The common ways and makes them holy ground?

THE WARDEN

O FEVERISH heart, that dost forever strain
Against forbidding bars that still withhold
Fulfilment of thy hope—thy dream untold,
Thy longing passion spends itself in vain.
No distant heights there are for thee to gain,
The azure deeps where white wings may unfold
In glimmering dawns or flaming sunset-gold
Unknown to thee shall evermore remain.

For by thee in thy prison Something stands—
Some higher shape of self, mayhap—with face
Compassionate as an angel's, but whose hands
Shall never set thee free—nay, yesternight
It stood long, silent, gazing into space,
Then made more fast the doors that bar thy flight.

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

AS FAR as sight could reach the wild peaks rose,
Tier after tier against the limpid blue,
Titanic forms that stormed the heavens anew
At every turn, crowned with imperial snows;
And then, as day sank softly to its close,
Diaphanous, ethereal they grew,
Mere wraiths of rainbow-mist that from our view
Dream-laden, lapsed to darkness and repose.

And suddenly I found my vision blurred,
And knew that deeper chord was touched again
Which once in Hungary, when I had heard
A passionately wild, appealing strain
Of gypsy music, left me strangely stirred
With incommunicable joy and pain.

ON MOUNT PILATUS

I STOOD on Mount Pilatus, freshly crowned
In all the splendour of new-fallen snow,
And heard the bells of myriad flocks below,
Filling the valleys with mysterious sound;
Enchanting cadences, that lingering wound
Among the dreaming hills, elusive, slow,
And bearing in the liquid ebb and flow
An elemental music, faint, profound.

And I have wondered if the joy and pain,
And happy laughter and the anguished sighs,
So strangely blended in our lives, attain
Consistency and sweetness as they rise,
And, woven to one pure, ethereal strain,
Make harmony beyond the tranquil skies.

BEYOND THE VIOLET RAYS

BEYOND the violet rays we do not know
What colours lie, what fields of light abound,
Or what undreamed effulgence may surround
Our dreaming consciousness above, below;
Nor is it far that finite sense can go
Along the subtle passages of sound,
The finer tonal waves are too profound
For mortal ears to catch their ebb and flow.

And there are moments when upon us steal
Monitions of far wider realms that lie
Beyond our spirit borders, and we feel
That fine, ethereal joys we cannot name,
In some vast orbit circling, sweeping by,
Touch us in passing as with wings of flame.

THE SENSE OF MYSTERY

I WOULD not lose the sense of mystery
That broods about our little lives and springs
Eternal from the unknown heart of things,
Nor miss by rude familiarity
Perception of the finer harmony
That underlies all dissonance and brings
The unseen to our consciousness and flings
A glory round our way continually.

For they alone shall win their happiness
Who still make room for things inscrutable;
And he who sees the greater in the less—
Who finds in folded leaf or purple bell
The Infinite—must in himself possess
Some kinship with the daily miracle.

ON SILENT BATTLE-FIELDS

UPON the deathless battle-field, where all
The pulses leap responsive to the beat
Of martial music, and amidst the heat
Of mortal strife is heard the inner call,
The nation's need—which ever holds in thrall
Heroic souls—never to know defeat,
But go with high, unshrinking heart to meet
The foe—it would not seem so hard to fall.

But on the fields at home when hope is fled
And only ghosts of former joys remain—
God pity those unknown who daily tread
The desolate, monotonous ways of pain,
And nightly bivouac, with their hosts of dead
On silent battle-fields where hearts are slain.

AS ONE EMBARKING

AS ONE embarking turns deep-visioned eyes
Back to his fast-receding native shore,
Whose crystal tides shall ebb and flow no more
For him, or sound their silver harmonies;
And there beholds how all the landscape lies
Transfigured with a charm it never wore
In those indifferent early days before
He faced the loneliness of foreign skies;

So earth becomes, to eyes bedimmed with tears
Of that impending change whose silent knell
Sounds at the heart of slowly-waning years
(Even to those who always loved it well),
Transfigured with a charm that more endears,
And touched with beauty indescribable.

THOUGH BOUND TO EARTH

THOUGH we are bound to earth by many ties,
And all along the roads whereby we came
A thousand tongues to listening hearts proclaim
Our kinship with the world that round us lies;
Though sunlit fields and woods and arching skies,
And flowers that break in shafts of living flame,
Constrain with beauty all our quickened frame,
Breathing love's messages in sweetest guise;

Yet deeper than all rapture earth may bring
Is that fine sense whereby we are aware
Of something in ourselves that does not spring
From life without or in its fullness share,
But like a captive bird with quivering wing
Strains ever to its native, purer air.

THE TEMPLE

HE BUILT a temple in his youth, so fair—
So lofty in conception and design,
It seemed like some creation half divine,
A fitting place for penitence and prayer.
With selfless zeal he wrought, his only care
To give his best—his all—and build a shrine
That should afar for longing pilgrims shine,
Calling their weary souls to worship there.

But long neglected now the temple stands,
Its crumbling walls with rusted ivy hung,
And he who built it with the eager hands
And shining hope of youth now sits among
The money-changers at the market-place,
Suspicious, calculating, cold of face.

THE RECONCILER

SHE KNEW but one desire, one single aim
Consumed her days and robbed her nights of rest—
To reconcile the two whom she loved best,
Who, long estranged, yet of one household came;
And while for this she strove, her gentle frame
And tender heart were often sore distressed,
For all her longing love and pain repressed
Seemed but as fuel added to the flame.

But on that day of silence when she passed
By unseen pathways to the distant spheres,
What life had failed to do, death wrought at last,
For they who through the long, embittered years
Had spoken not, now stood with hands locked fast,
And looked into each other's face with tears.

KINGS' PALACES

IVISITED the palaces of kings,
And marvelled at the storied treasure brought
With vast expenditure of time and thought
To play upon the heart's imaginings;
All cunningly devised and priceless things—
Fine sculptured forms, rare, costly gems that caught
The sun, great canvases, and fabrics wrought
With wondrous skill to give the fancy wings.

But, coming forth, there crowded round my way
Such opulence of nature's tapestries,
That I reflected how the humblest may
Inherit all those lavish treasures
Beside which human art is children's play,
And kings' possessions merest travesties.

O NOT WHEN APRIL WAKES THE DAFFODILS!

(1917)

O NOT when April wakes the daffodils,
And bob-o-links o'er misty meadows ring
Their fluted bells, and orchards fleeced with spring
Go climbing up to crown the radiant hills;—
Not when the budding balm o'Gilead spills
Its spices on the air, and lilacs bring
Old days to mind and every living thing
The brimming cup with fresh enchantment fills—

Not then bring back the dread report of death,
Of eyes to loveliness forever sealed,
Of youth that perished as a passing breath,
Of love laid waste and agonies untold,
When here in every sweet Canadian field
Are heaped such treasures of green and gold!

AS DAY BEGINS TO WANE

ENCOMPASSED by a thousand nameless fears,
I see life's little day begin to wane,
And hear the well-loved voices call in vain
Across the narrowing margin of my years;
And as the Valley of the Shadow nears,
Such yearning tides of tenderness and pain
Sweep over me that I can scarce restrain
The gathering flood of ineffectual tears.

Yet there are moments when the shadows bring
No sense of parting or approaching night,
But rather, all my soul seems broadening
Before the dawn of unimagined light—
As if within the dark a folded wing
Were making ready for a wider flight.

The Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books

Lorne Pierce—Editor

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